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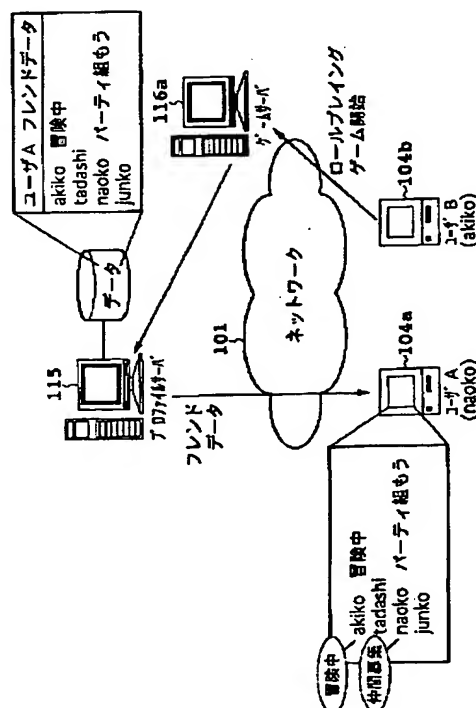
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(57) 【要約】

【課題】 情報サービスを共有する相手を簡単に見つける。

【解決手段】 PC104b（クライアント）がサーバ群102の提供する情報サービスたとえば、オンラインゲームを利用すると、ゲームサーバ116aはPC104bが利用するゲーム、接続状況をプロファイルサーバ115に引き渡す。プロファイルサーバは、収集したクライアントの利用状況を現在、接続されている全てクライアントに対して通知する。



【特許請求の範囲】

【請求項 1】 複数のゲーム装置が通信ネットワークを介して接続されており、各ユーザについての個人情報を格納するプロファイルサーバと少なくとも 1 つの情報サービスを提供する情報提供サーバとを備えたサーバシステムであって、

ユーザが他のユーザの個人情報について確認を行うため、少なくとも他の一人のユーザを選択し前記プロファイルサーバに登録するための登録手段と、
前記ゲーム装置より情報サービス提供の要求があった場合、前記情報提供サーバは、要求が行われたゲーム装置から情報提供の要求が行われたことをプロファイルサーバに通知する通知手段と、
プロファイルサーバにおいて、前記要求が行われたゲーム機のユーザの個人情報を更新する更新手段と、
登録されている他のユーザの個人情報を前記ユーザのゲーム機に対して所定の間隔で送信する送信手段とを備えたことを特徴とするサーバシステム。

【請求項 2】 各ユーザについての個人情報を格納するプロファイルサーバと少なくとも 1 つの情報サービスを提供する情報提供サーバとを備えたサーバシステムに接続されたゲーム装置であって、予めユーザにより選択された少なくとも 1 人の他のユーザの前記情報サービスの利用状況を含めた個人情報がプロファイルサーバに登録されており、前記登録された個人情報は、所定の間隔で更新されるとともに、前記ゲーム機に定期的送信されており、前記ゲーム機は、送信された前記個人情報を表示させる表示制御手段を備えたことを特徴とするゲーム機。

【請求項 3】 前記他のユーザの情報サービスの利用状況を所定の形式により表示するための対応表を設定するための設定手段を備えており、
前記表示制御手段は、前記対応表を用いて、前記他のユーザの情報サービスの利用状況を所定の形式により表示することを特徴とする請求項 2 に記載のゲーム機。

【請求項 4】 前記所定の形式が、アイコンであることを特徴とする請求項 3 に記載のゲーム機。

【請求項 5】 各ユーザについての個人情報を格納するプロファイルサーバと少なくとも 1 つの情報サービスを提供する情報提供サーバとを備えたサーバシステムに接続されたゲーム装置で実行するプログラムを記録した記録媒体であって、予めユーザにより選択された少なくとも 1 人の他のユーザの前記情報サービスの利用状況を含めた個人情報がプロファイルサーバに登録されており、前記登録された個人情報は、所定の間隔で更新されるとともに、前記ゲーム機に定期的送信されており、前記プログラムは、
送信された前記個人情報を表示させる表示制御ステップを備えたことを特徴とする記録媒体。

【請求項 6】 各ユーザについての個人情報を格納する

プロファイルサーバと少なくとも 1 つの情報サービスを提供する情報提供サーバとを備えたサーバシステムに接続されたゲーム装置で実行するプログラムであって、予めユーザにより選択された少なくとも 1 人の他のユーザの前記情報サービスの利用状況を含めた個人情報がプロファイルサーバに登録されており、前記登録された個人情報は、所定の間隔で更新されるとともに、前記ゲーム機に定期的送信されており、前記プログラムは、送信された前記個人情報を表示させる表示制御ステップを備えたことを特徴とするプログラム。

【発明の詳細な説明】**【0001】**

【発明の属する技術分野】 本発明は、通信ネットワークを介してサーバなどの情報サービスシステムと接続可能であり、サーバから各種情報サービスを受ける場合に好適なゲーム装置、情報サービスシステム、情報サービス方法、記録媒体およびプログラムに関する。

【0002】

【従来の技術】 インターネットなどの通信ネットワークの普及によりオンラインゲーム、すなわち、インターネットに接続されたサーバにゲーム装置を接続させ、サーバから提供されるゲーム関連情報を使用してゲーム装置側でゲームを行うオンラインゲームも開始されている。

【0003】 オンラインゲームは、ユーザが単独でプレイするゲームもあれば、対戦ゲームのように複数のユーザが参加するゲームもある。

【0004】

【発明が解決しようとする課題】 複数のユーザが参加するオンラインゲームを行う場合、ユーザ同士は電話、あるいは電子メール等で予め連絡をとりあって、ゲームを行う日時を決めておく。

【0005】 したがって、いっしょにゲームを行う他のユーザは、身近な友人に限られてしまう。また、インターネット上のチャット（電子会議室）などで対戦相手を募集することも考えられるが、必ず、対戦相手が見つかるとは限らない。

【0006】 そこで、本発明の目的は、オンラインゲームなど、他のユーザと共に情報サービスを利用する場合に、他のユーザを容易に見つけることができるゲーム装置、サーバシステム、情報サービス方法、記録媒体および記録媒体を提供することにある。

【0007】

【課題を解決するための手段】 このような目的を達成するために、請求項 1 の発明は、複数のゲーム装置が通信ネットワークを介して接続されており、各ユーザについての個人情報を格納するプロファイルサーバと少なくとも 1 つの情報サービスを提供する情報提供サーバとを備えたサーバシステムであって、ユーザが他のユーザの個人情報について確認を行うため、少なくとも他の一人のユーザを選択し前記プロファイルサーバに登録す

るための登録手段と、前記ゲーム装置より情報サービス提供の要求があった場合、前記情報提供サーバは、要求が行われたゲーム装置から情報提供の要求が行われたことをプロファイルサーバに通知する通知手段と、プロファイルサーバにおいて、前記要求が行われたゲーム機のユーザの個人情報を更新する更新手段と、登録されている他のユーザの個人情報を前記ユーザのゲーム機に対して所定の間隔で送信する送信手段とを備えたことを特徴とする。

【0008】請求項2の発明は、各ユーザについての個人情報10を格納するプロファイルサーバと少なくとも1つの情報サービスを提供する情報提供サーバとを備えたサーバシステムに接続されたゲーム装置であって、予めユーザにより選択された少なくとも1人の他のユーザの前記情報サービスの利用状況を含めた個人情報がプロファイルサーバに登録されており、前記登録された個人情報は、所定の間隔で更新されるとともに、前記ゲーム機に定期的に送信されており、前記ゲーム機は、送信された前記個人情報を表示させる表示制御手段を備えたことを特徴とする。

【0009】請求項3の発明は、前記他のユーザの情報サービスの利用状況を所定の形式により表示するための対応表を設定するための設定手段を備えており、前記表示制御手段は、前記対応表を用いて、前記他のユーザの情報サービスの利用状況を所定の形式により表示することを特徴とする。

【0010】請求項4の発明は、前記所定の形式が、アイコンであることを特徴とする。

【0011】請求項5の発明は、各ユーザについての個人情報30を格納するプロファイルサーバと少なくとも1つの情報サービスを提供する情報提供サーバとを備えたサーバシステムに接続されたゲーム装置で実行するプログラムを記録した記録媒体であって、予めユーザにより選択された少なくとも1人の他のユーザの前記情報サービスの利用状況を含めた個人情報がプロファイルサーバに登録されており、前記登録された個人情報は、所定の間隔で更新されるとともに、前記ゲーム機に定期的に送信されており、前記プログラムは、送信された前記個人情報を表示させる表示制御ステップを備えたことを特徴とする。

【0012】請求項6の発明は、各ユーザについての個人情報40を格納するプロファイルサーバと少なくとも1つの情報サービスを提供する情報提供サーバとを備えたサーバシステムに接続されたゲーム装置で実行するプログラムであって、予めユーザにより選択された少なくとも1人の他のユーザの前記情報サービスの利用状況を含めた個人情報がプロファイルサーバに登録されており、前記登録された個人情報は、所定の間隔で更新されるとともに、前記ゲーム機に定期的に送信されており、前記プログラムは、送信された前記個人情報を表示させ

る表示制御ステップを備えたことを特徴とする。

【0013】

【発明の実施の形態】以下、図面を参照して本発明の実施形態を詳細に説明する。

【0014】本実施形態のネットワークシステムの全体のシステム構成を図1に示す。図1において、ネットワークシステムは、通信ネットワーク101、ネットワークサービス企業のサーバ群102、及び通信ネットワーク101を介してサーバ群102と接続可能な複数のユーザが使用するクライアント、例えば103a、103b、104a、104b等を含む。サーバ群102及びクライアント103a、103b、104a、104bは、各々コンピュータシステムである。

【0015】サーバ群102、内部の複数種のサーバが協同して動作し、種々の情報サービスを提供する。サーバ群102内の後述の複数種のサーバを1組とする情報サービスシステムが世界各国に設置されて、サーバ群102を構成する。情報サービスシステムは認証サーバ111、コンテンツサーバ112、メッセージサーバ113、メールサーバ114、ゲームAサーバ116a、ゲームBサーバ116b、プロファイルサーバ102gを有する。認証サーバ111は会員ユーザのアカウント（ユーザID（識別子））及びパスワードを管理する。また認証サーバ111は、ユーザの接続状況（オンライン/オフライン）及びオンライン中であるユーザのクライアントマシンのアドレスを管理するようにしてもよい。

【0016】コンテンツサーバ112はスポーツ、音楽、漫画、買い物情報及びその他各種情報を提供する。

【0017】メッセージサーバ113はユーザ間のリアルタイムなメッセージ交換の環境を提供する。詳しくは、ユーザがクライアントマシン上で起動するメッセージアプリケーションとチャットアプリケーションのための環境を提供する。メッセージサーバ113はメッセージアプリケーションの交換メッセージ、チャットアプリケーションのチャットメッセージを配信するためのルーティング（送信先、経路の設定）をも行う。

【0018】メールサーバ114はユーザ間の電子メール交換サービスを提供する。

【0019】ゲームAサーバ116a、ゲームBサーバ116bはオンラインゲームを提供する。ユーザはビューアからゲームサーバ内のオンラインゲームを起動してゲームを行う。例えばそのオンラインゲームがロールプレイングゲーム（ユーザがゲームのキャラクタになってプレイするゲーム）の場合には、他の会員ユーザと共にロールプレイングゲームを行うことができる。

【0020】プロファイルサーバ102gはステータスファイルを内部記憶装置に記憶し、ユーザのアカウント毎にそのアカウントに対応するユーザのプロファイル（横顔、紹介）、後述のステータス情報やブチメッセー

ジ等をステータスファイルに記憶して管理する。ユーザはビューアから自分のプロフィール、プチメッセージ、子供であることの情報をプロフィールサーバ102gへ登録することができる。

【0021】クライアント103a、103bは、家庭用の（ビデオ）ゲーム機であり、たとえば、ソニー社のプレイステーションII（商標）を使用することができる。

【0022】クライアント104a、104bは汎用のパーソナル・コンピュータ（以下、PCと呼ぶ）である。上記クライアントは、上述の本発明に係る後述のプログラムをCDROMなどの記録媒体からロードして実行することができる。クライアント103a、103b、104a、104bを単にクライアントと総称することができる。

【0023】通信ネットワーク101は、サーバ群102及び上述のクライアント103a、103b、104a、104b等を接続する。通信ネットワーク101としては、本実施形態ではインターネットを想定する。データの送受信にはTCP/IP、HTTP（hypertext transfer protocol）、SMTP（simple mail transfer protocol）、FTP（file transfer protocol）等通常のプロトコルを使用すればよい。

【0024】本実施形態では、クライアントを家庭用のビデオゲーム機103aとした場合について簡単に説明する。

【0025】クライアント103aは少なくともゲーム機本体、テレビ受像機、CDROMドライブ及びコントローラを含む。

【0026】ゲーム機本体201はビューアを起動しサーバ群102へアクセスする。テレビ受像機はゲーム機本体201からの画像及び音のデータを出力する。コントローラはユーザの指示をゲーム機本体201へ入力する。ビューアはCDROMからゲーム機本体にインストールされる。本実施形態では、ビューア内に図5のプログラムが組み込まれており、図5のプログラムをゲーム機本体内のCPUが実行することにより、本発明に係る情報処理を実行する。

【0027】より具体的には、ユーザがゲーム機103aを使用して図6の表示画面中で、情報サービスシステムの会員となっている他のユーザのステータス（利用状況）を知ることができる。ここで、ステータスとは、情報サービスシステムに接続しているか否か、接続している場合には、どのような情報サービスを利用しているか、子供であるか否か、である。

【0028】ステータスの報知の対象となるユーザを制限することもできる。この場合には、ユーザは予めクライアントからプロフィールサーバ115に対してステータスを知りたいユーザの名前を登録しておく。登録されるユーザの名前をまとめたファイルは、各ユーザごとに

用意される。本実施形態ではこのファイルをフレンドリストと呼ぶことにする。

【0029】本実施形態ではステータスを知りたくないユーザ名もクライアントからプロフィールサーバ115に登録することができる。登録されたユーザ名のファイルを、本実施形態ではブラックリストと呼ぶことにする。ブラックリストもユーザごとに用意される。

【0030】以上の点を踏まえ、他のユーザのステータスの報知方法を図2を参照して説明する。

【0031】ユーザ名が「akiko」のユーザBがクライアント104bを使用して情報サービスにアクセスする。ユーザIDとパスワードによる本人認証が認証サーバ111により行われた後、ゲームサーバ116aへのアクセスが許可される。ユーザBのクライアント104bがゲームサーバ116aにアクセスしてたとえば、ロールプレイングゲームを開始すると、ゲームサーバ116aはプロフィールサーバ115に対して、ゲームを開始したユーザ名（この場合、「akiko」）とゲーム名およびステータス、この場合、ゲームを開始した状態であることを示すステータス情報をプロフィールサーバ115に送る。送られたユーザ名およびステータス情報はユーザ名「akiko」のプロファイルデータ記憶領域に記憶される。

【0032】ユーザAのクライアント（ユーザ名「naoko」）のフレンドリストにユーザ名「akiko」が登録されている場合、プロフィールサーバ115は定期的に、フレンドリストに登録されているクライアントのステータス状態をクライアントAに送信するので、この時点で、図2に示すようにクライアントAの表示画面には「akiko」がゲームを開始した旨を示す「冒険中」のメッセージがユーザ名「akiko」の右横に表示される。なお、「冒険中」はある特定のゲームに割り当てられたメッセージであり、他のゲームをユーザBが開始した場合にはそのゲーム内容を表すメッセージが表示される。このメッセージはプロフィールサーバ115で用意され、プロフィールサーバ115からクライアント104aに送られる。ユーザ名の左斜め上に示されるメッセージはクライアントのユーザが与えるメッセージで本明細書ではプチメッセージと呼ぶことにする。

【0033】このように、ユーザAが選択し、フレンドリストに登録したユーザ名（「akiko」）に対応するユーザBがクライアントを使用して、情報サービスシステムにアクセスすると、そのユーザが利用している情報サービス名がクライアントAの表示画面に表示される。

【0034】この形態では自己のステータス情報も上述と同様にして、ステータス情報やプチメッセージがプロフィールサーバ115からクライアント104aに送られるので、クライアント104aには自己のステータス情報やプチメッセージが表示される。

【0035】また、ユーザBのクライアント104bの表示画面にもクライアント104aと同様、フレンドリストに登録したユーザのクライアントのステータス情報が表示される。

【0036】このような情報処理を実行するためのゲームサーバ（情報サービスを提供するサーバの一例）、プロファイルサーバおよびクライアントの情報処理内容を図3～図5に示す。

【0037】図3～図5に示す処理手順はCPUが実行可能なプログラム、スクリプト、あるいはHTML文書のようなマークアップランゲージ文書に代表されるオブジェクトの形態で、各装置内のハードディスクに保存され、システムメモリにロードされてCPUにより実行される。ここで、プログラムとは、CPUが直接実行可能なマシン語で記載されたオブジェクトを意味する。スクリプトとは、CPUが実行すべき情報処理内容が定義され、定義された情報処理内容をインタープリターによりCPUが実行するオブジェクトを意味する。インタープリターはスクリプトをマシン語のプログラムに翻訳するプログラムである。マークアップランゲージ文書は、ブラウザと呼ばれるプログラムにより解析され、マークアップランゲージ文書中で定義された動作命令（タグと呼ばれる）をブラウザが実行する。

【0038】情報サービスを提供するサーバの動作を、ゲームサーバ116aを例に図3を参照して説明する。

【0039】ゲームサーバ116aは、クライアントからの初めてのアクセス要求を受け付けると、クライアントから送られるクライアント名および情報サービス名、この場合、オンラインゲームの種類名をプロファイルサーバ115に引き渡す。この後、指定された情報サービスの提供を開始する（ステップS10→S15）。

【0040】情報サービスのための通信が行われている間は、ゲームサーバ116aはスタート→ステップS10→S20→S25→エンドの手順を繰り返し実行し、従来と同様の情報サービス、この場合、複数のユーザによるオンラインゲームの提供を行う。情報サービスが終了すると、終了の旨を示す情報がプロファイルサーバ115に送られる（ステップS30→S50）。

【0041】プロファイルサーバ115側の処理内容を図4を参照して説明する。

【0042】プロファイルサーバ115では、図4の処理手順を繰り返し実行して、情報サービス提供用のサーバおよびユーザのクライアントから情報送信を待機している。情報サービス用サーバから、上述のステータス情報およびユーザ名が送られた場合は、ユーザ名に対応したステータス情報記憶領域（ステータスファイル）にステータス情報を書き込む（ステップS100→S105）。

【0043】ユーザのクライアントでは、情報サービスシステムに接続している間は、一定周期で、ステータス

情報の要求を送るので、プロファイルサーバ115はこの要求を受け取ると、要求を行ったクライアントのユーザ名に対応するユーザリストに記載されているステータス情報やプチメッセージ等を抽出し、要求を行ったクライアントに送信する（ステップS110→S115）。

【0044】本実施形態では、ユーザの検索機能をプロファイルサーバ115が提供する。このために、ユーザのクライアントから検索条件としてカテゴリー、たとえば、ある特定のオンラインゲームの名前をプロファイルサーバ115が受け付けると、プロファイルサーバ115は全てのユーザのステータス情報を検索して、クライアントから与えられた検索条件に合致するステータス情報を、検索要求を行ったクライアントに対して送信する。この検索結果の中には、検索条件に合致するユーザの人数が含まれる。後述するが、検索結果としてえられるユーザのステータス情報が、所定数、たとえば、20を超える場合には、ステータス情報は20個単位でクライアント側の指示に応じてクライアントに送信される（ステップS120→S125）。なお、ブラックリストに記載されているユーザ名を有するステータス情報は、送信の対象から外される。

【0045】図5を参照してクライアント側の動作を説明する。

【0046】クライアント側では、情報サービスシステム後、内部タイマー等により一定時間。たとえば、10秒を計時し、10秒が経過するごとにプロファイルサーバ115に対してステータス情報を要求する。この要求に応じて、プロファイルサーバ115からは、フレンドリストに記載されているユーザのステータス情報が送られてくるので、そのステータス情報を表示画面に表示する（ステップS210→S215）。

【0047】その形態を図6の符号1005、1009、1010、1012に示す。なお、図6はユーザの検索画面でのステータス情報である点に注意されたい。ちなみに、符号1005は情報サービスに接続しているか否かを示すアイコンで、接続と非接続でアイコンの形態が異なる。1009はユーザ名、1010は子供であることを示す情報、1011は利用している情報サービスの種類内容、この形態では、オンラインゲームの名称を示す。1012はステータス（動作状態）を示す。

【0048】ユーザが不図示の検索条件入力画面を使用してカテゴリーを入力する。たとえば、特定のオンラインゲームをカテゴリーとして入力すると、プロファイルサーバ115は入力したカテゴリーに関するユーザのステータス情報を検索要求したクライアントに返すので、クライアントでは、そのステータス情報を図6に示す形態で表示する。

【0049】図6の表示画面を簡単に説明しておく。1001はカテゴリー検索条件に合致するユーザ数を表示する領域である。1002はカテゴリーの種類を示す表示

である。1003は検索条件に合致するユーザ数の表示である。1004はプチメッセージであり、表示されたユーザ名を有するユーザが登録したメッセージである。

【0050】

【表1】

ID	利用状況	プチメッセージ
1	冒険しようよ	party
2	冒険中	冒険中
3	item 販売中です	item sell

【0051】クライアント側において、ユーザの利用状況に対応したプチメッセージを表1に示すようにユーザにとって一目で利用状況がわかるように、予め設定しておく。

【0052】ここで、サーバ側から送られてきた各ユーザの利用状況に基き、その利用状況に応じたプチメッセージが図6に示す用に各ユーザ名の横に、アイコン（吹き出し）の形状で表示される。

【0053】また、例えば、ここでは、「冒険しようよ」が「party」と1対1で対応しているが、「冒険しようよ」と同じ意味を持つ「参加者募集中」、「冒険待機中」等の言葉も同様に「party」と対応付けてもよい。同様に、1つのプチメッセージと同じ意味を持つ複数の利用状況とを対応付けてもよい。

【0054】また、サーバ側において、予め「利用状況（目的）」と、プチメッセージとを予め対応させて登録しておき、プチメッセージについても、個人情報としてサーバからクライアントへ送るようにしてもよい。そうすることにより、クライアントでは自分でプチメッセージを設定することなく、プチメッセージが表示される。

【0055】このように本実施形態では、プロファイルサーバが、各ユーザが登録した友人のリストを持っており、そこには各友人の個人情報が含まれている。

【0056】この個人情報には、情報サーバの利用状況が含まれており、利用状況に変化のあった場合、その情報は情報サーバからプロファイルサーバへ伝達され、個人情報が更新される。このプロファイルデータは定期的にクライアントに送られる。

【0057】クライアントでは、送られた情報をもとに、画面上にて各友人の状況を確認できる。この時、各ユーザが予め登録している「目的」に対応して登録されているプチメッセージが表示されることにより、容易に友人の状況を確認できる。

【0058】1008はユーザが情報サービスシステムに登録しているか否かを示すアイコンである。接続の有無に応じて、異なるアイコンが表示される。アイコンイメージはクライアント側に用意されており、プロファイルサーバ115から送信されたステータス情報に基いて、表示に使用するアイコンイメージがクライアント側で選択される。

【0059】1009は情報サービスシステムの会員の

ユーザ名である。1011は利用している情報サービス名である。1012はユーザのクライアントの動作状況を表す情報である。

【0060】1006は検索結果の表示を前に戻すよう指示するボタン（BACKボタンと称す）である。1007はソート、すなわち、検索結果の並び替えを指示するボタンであり、このボタンの操作に応じて予め定めた分野ごとに表示が並び替えられる。1008は、検索結果を先に進めるように指示するボタン（NEXTボタンと称す）である。

【0061】この形態では、ユーザが検索条件をプロファイルサーバ115に与えると、検索条件に合致するステータス情報として、プチメッセージ、情報サービスシステムへの接続／非接続情報、子供であるか否かの情報、動作状態を示すメッセージがプロファイルサーバ115からクライアントに送られて図6に示すようにクライアント側で表示される。

【0062】ユーザがソートボタン1007を操作した場合には、ソートの指示がクライアントからプロファイルサーバ115に送られてプロファイルサーバ115側で索ティング処理が行われ、その結果がクライアントに返される。ソータの処理の結果はクライアントの表示画面に表示される（ステップS220→S225）。

【0063】BACKボタン1006が操作されると、検索結果の中の直前の20個のステータス情報の要求がクライアントからプロファイルサーバ115に送られ、該当するステータス情報がクライアントに送られる。クライアントでは送られたステータス情報を表示画面に表示する（ステップS230→S235）。

【0064】NEXTボタン1008が操作されると、検索結果の中の以後の20個のステータス情報の要求がクライアントからプロファイルサーバ115に送られ、該当するステータス情報がクライアントに送られる。クライアントでは送られたステータス情報を表示画面に表示する（ステップS240→S245）。

【0065】上述の実施形態の他に次の形態を実施できる。

1) 上述の実施形態ではオンラインゲームを情報サービスの例として示したが、状サービスはこれに限定することはない。

2) 上述の実施形態では、ステータス情報が多数ある場

合には、その中の特定数をプロファイルサーバからクライアントに送るようにしているが、検索結果を全て、クライアントに送るようにしてもよい。

3) ステータス情報の報知形態は、アイコン、文字、図形など各種の形態とすることができる。

4) 本発明でいうゲーム装置の中には、専用ゲーム装置、汎用パソコン、携帯電話機、携帯用情報端末等、情報サービスシステムに接続して情報サービスの提供を受けることができる情報処理機器全てが含まれる。

5) 上述の実施形態では通信ネットワークとしてインターネットを想定したが、通信ネットワークの概念の中には、LAN、一般公衆電話回線など各種の通信ネットワークが含まれる。

6) 情報サービスシステムが提供する情報サービスとは、オンラインゲーム、チャット（電子会議）、メッセージ通信、電子メール送受信サービス、その他、役務を提供するサービスを意味する。上述した変形例の他にも種々の変形が可能であるが、その変形が特許請求の範囲に示す技術思想に沿うものである限り、その変形は本発明の技術的範囲内となる。

7) 上述の実施形態ではゲームサーバ等がユーザの利用状況を検出し、プロファイルサーバが利用状況をクライアントに通知しているが、1台のサーバで、利用状況の検出と通知を行ってもよい。

【0066】

【発明の効果】以上、説明したように、請求項1～6の発明によれば、ゲーム装置側では、他のユーザの個人情報を知ることができるので、情報サービスシステムに接続しているユーザを簡単に見つけることができる。

【図面の簡単な説明】

【図1】本発明実施形態のシステム構成を示すブロック図である。

【図2】本発明実施形態の情報処理内容を説明するための説明図である。

【図3】サーバ側の情報処理内容を示すフローチャートである。

【図4】プロファイルサーバ側の情報処理内容を示すフローチャートである。

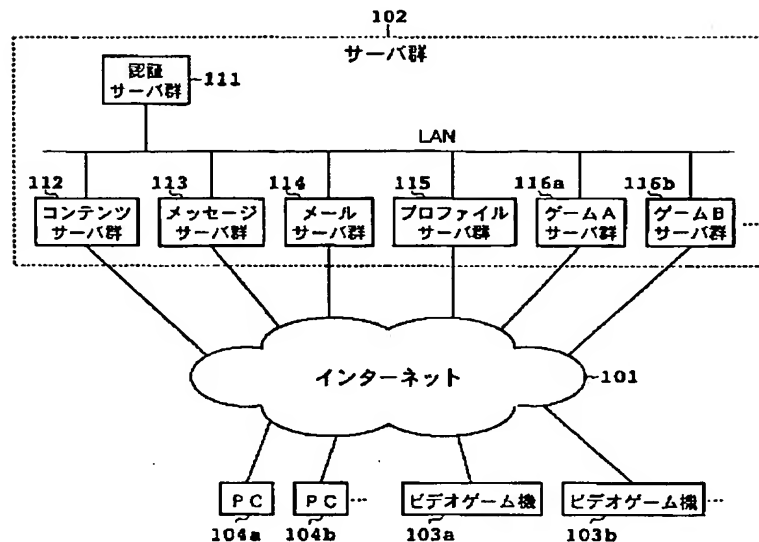
【図5】クライアント側の情報処理内容を示すフローチャートである。

【図6】クライアント側の表示の一例を示す説明図である。

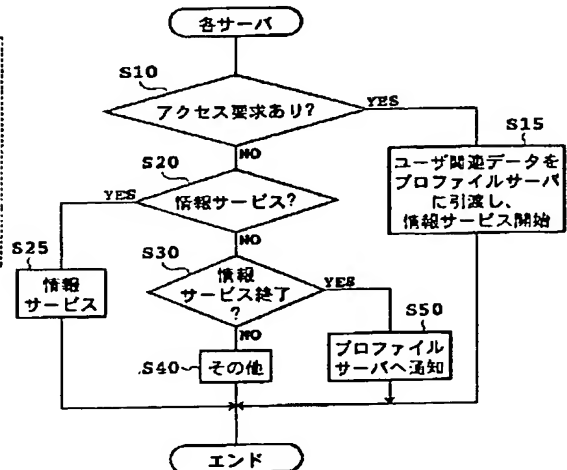
【符号の説明】

- 102 サーバ群
- 103a、103b ビデオゲーム機
- 104a、104b PC
- 115 プロファイルサーバ

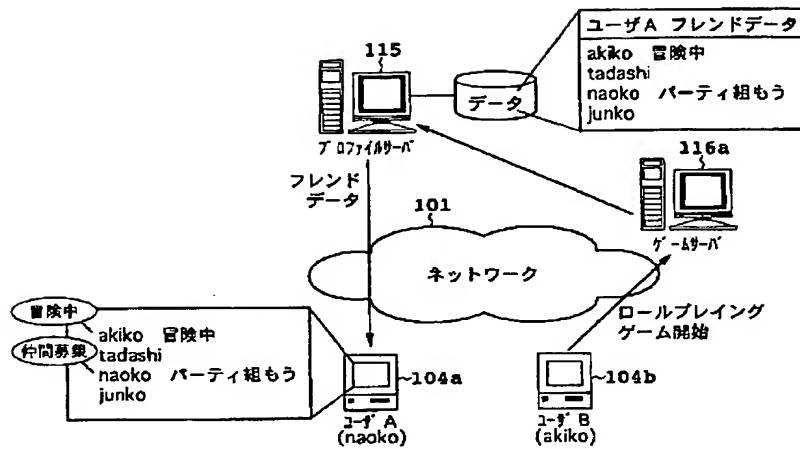
【図1】



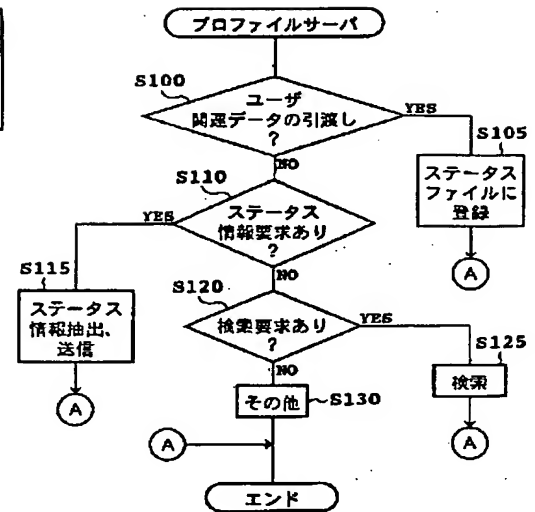
【図3】



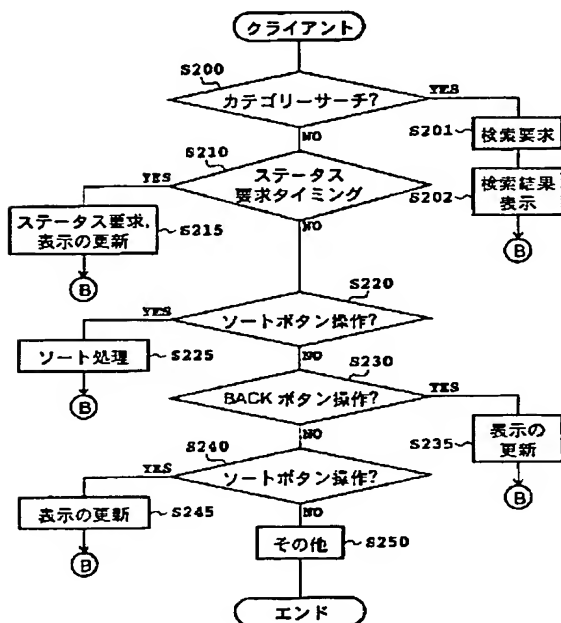
【図2】



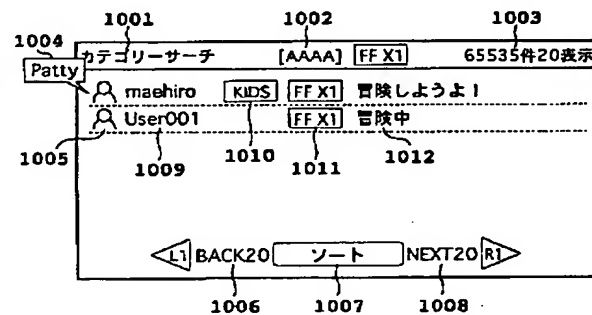
【図4】



【図5】



【図6】



PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN

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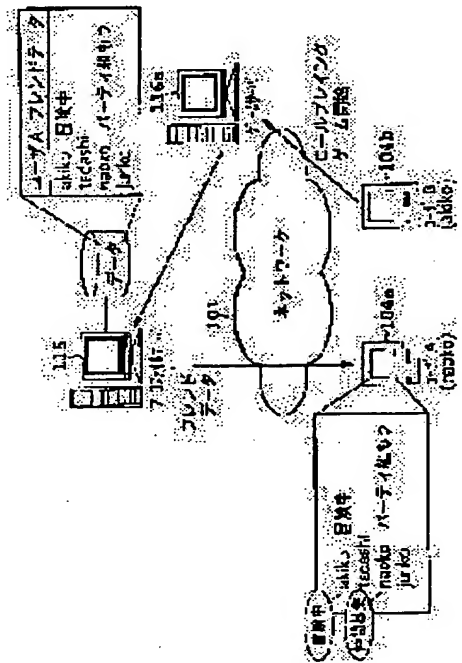
(72)Inventor : MAEHIRO KAZUTOYO

(54) GAME DEVICE, SERVER SYSTEM, INFORMATION SERVICE METHOD, RECORDING MEDIUM AND PROGRAM

(57)Abstract:

PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED: To easily find out a party to share an information service.

SOLUTION: When a PC 104b (client) utilizes an information service such as online game, for example, provided by a server group 102, a game server 116a dispatches the game to be utilized by the PC 104b and a connection condition to a profile server 115. The profile server reports the collected utilization conditions of clients to all the clients connected at present.



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[Date of extinction of right]

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CLAIMS

[Claim(s)]

[Claim 1] It is the server system equipped with the profile server which two or more game equipments are connected through the communication network, and stores the individual humanity news about each user, and the information offer server which offers at least one data utility. The registration means for choosing other one user at least and registering with said profile server, in order that a user may check about other users' individual humanity news, When there is a demand of information service provision from said game equipment, said information offer server In a notice means to notify to a profile server that the demand of information offer was performed from the game equipment with which the demand was performed, and a profile server The server system characterized by having an updating means to update the individual humanity news of the user of a game machine to whom said demand was given, and a transmitting means to transmit other users' individual humanity news registered at the predetermined spacing to said user's game machine.

[Claim 2] It is game equipment connected to the server system equipped with the profile server which stores the individual humanity news about each user, and the information offer server which offers at least one data utility. While individual humanity news including the use situation of said data utility of other at least one user beforehand chosen by the user is registered into the profile server and said registered individual humanity news is updated at the predetermined spacing It is the game machine characterized by being periodically transmitted to said game machine and equipping said game machine with the display-control means on which said transmitted individual humanity news is displayed.

[Claim 3] said — others — the setting means for setting up the conversion table for displaying the use situation of a user's data utility according to a predetermined format — having — **** — said display-control means — said conversion table — using — said — others — the game machine according to claim 2 characterized by displaying the use situation of a user's data utility according to a predetermined format.

[Claim 4] The game machine according to claim 3 with which said predetermined format is characterized by being an icon.

[Claim 5] It is the record medium which recorded the program performed with the game equipment connected to the server system equipped with the profile server which stores the individual humanity news about each user, and the information offer server which offers at least one data utility. While individual humanity news including the use situation of said data utility of other at least one user beforehand chosen by the user is registered into the profile server and said registered individual humanity news is updated at the predetermined spacing It is the record medium characterized by being periodically transmitted to said game machine and equipping said program with the display-control step on which said transmitted individual humanity news is displayed.

[Claim 6] It is the program performed with the game equipment connected to the server system equipped with the profile server which stores the individual humanity news about each user, and the information offer server which offers at least one data utility. While individual humanity news including the use situation of said data utility of other at least one user beforehand chosen by the user is registered into the profile server and said registered individual humanity news is updated at the predetermined spacing It is the program characterized by being periodically transmitted to said game machine and equipping said program with the display-control step on which said transmitted individual humanity news is displayed.

[Translation done.]

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[Detailed Description of the Invention]

[0001]

[Field of the Invention] When information service systems, such as a server, and connection are possible for this invention and it receives various data utility from a server through a communication network, it relates to suitable game equipment, an information service system, the data utility approach, a record medium, and a program.

[0002]

[Description of the Prior Art] Game equipment is connected to the server connected to the online game, i.e., the Internet, by the spread of communication networks, such as the Internet, and the online game which performs a game by the game equipment side using the game related information offered from a server is also started.

[0003] Some games played independently have a user, and an online game has some games in which two or more users participate like a versus fighting game.

[0004]

[Problem(s) to be Solved by the Invention] When performing the online game in which two or more users participate, users scramble for communication beforehand with a telephone or an electronic mail, and they decide on the time which performs a game.

[0005] Therefore, other users who perform a game together will be restricted to a familiar friend. Moreover, although looking for a waging-war partner by the chat on the Internet (teleconference room) etc. is also considered, a waging-war partner is not necessarily surely found.

[0006] Then, the purpose of this invention is to offer the game equipment and the server system which can find other users easily when using data utility with other users, such as an online game, the data utility approach, a record medium, and a record medium.

[0007]

[Means for Solving the Problem] In order to attain such a purpose, invention of claim 1 It is the server system equipped with the profile server which two or more game equipments are connected through the communication network, and stores the individual humanity news about each user, and the information offer server which offers at least one data utility. The registration means for choosing other one user at least and registering with said profile server, in order that a user may check about other users' individual humanity news, When there is a demand of information service provision from said game equipment, said information offer server In a notice means to notify to a profile server that the demand of information offer was performed from the game equipment with which the demand was performed, and a profile server It is characterized by having an updating means to update the individual humanity news of the user of a game machine to whom said demand was given, and a transmitting means to transmit other users' individual humanity news registered at the predetermined spacing to said user's game machine.

[0008] Invention of claim 2 is game equipment connected to the server system equipped with the profile server which stores the individual humanity news about each user, and the information offer server which offers at least one data utility. While individual humanity news including the use situation of said data utility of other at least one user beforehand chosen by the user is registered into the profile server and said registered individual humanity news is updated at the predetermined spacing It is periodically transmitted to said game machine, and is characterized by equipping said game machine with the display-control means on which said transmitted individual humanity news is displayed.

[0009] invention of claim 3 — said — others — the setting means for setting up the conversion table for displaying the use situation of a user's data utility according to a predetermined format — having — **** — said display-control means — said conversion table — using — said — others — it is characterized by displaying the use situation of a user's data utility according to a predetermined format.

[0010] Invention of claim 4 is characterized by said predetermined format being an icon.

[0011] Invention of claim 5 is the record medium which recorded the program performed with the game equipment connected to the server system equipped with the profile server which stores the individual humanity news about each user, and the information offer server which offers at least one data utility. While individual humanity news including the use situation of said data utility of other at least one user beforehand chosen by the user is registered into the profile server and said registered individual humanity news is updated at the predetermined spacing It is periodically transmitted to said game machine, and said program is characterized by having the display-control step on which said transmitted individual humanity news is displayed.

[0012] Invention of claim 6 is a program performed with the game equipment connected to the server system equipped with the profile server which stores the individual humanity news about each user, and the information offer server which offers at least one data utility. While individual humanity news including the use situation of said data utility of other at least one user beforehand chosen by the user is registered into the profile server and said registered individual humanity news is updated at the predetermined spacing It is periodically transmitted to said game machine, and said program is characterized by having the display-control step on which said transmitted individual humanity news is displayed.

[0013] [Embodiment of the Invention] Hereafter, the operation gestalt of this invention is explained to a detail with reference to a drawing.

[0014] The system configuration of the whole network system of this operation gestalt is shown in drawing 1. In drawing 1, a network system contains a communication network 101, the server group 102 of a network service company, and the client that two or more users in whom the server group 102 and connection are possible use through a communication network 101, for example, 103a, 103b, 104a, 104b, etc. The server group 102 and Clients 103a, 103b, 104a, and 104b are computer systems respectively.

[0015] The server group 102 and two or more sorts of internal servers operate cooperatively, and offer various data utility. The information service system which makes 1 set two or more sorts of below-mentioned servers in the server group 102 is installed in every country in the world, and constitutes the server group 102. An information service system has an authentication server 111, the contents server 112, the message server 113, a mail server 114, game A server 116a, game B server 116b, and profile server 102g. An authentication server 111 manages a member user's account (user ID (identifier)) and password. Moreover, you may make it an authentication server 111 manage the address of the client machine of the user who is among a user's connection situation (online/off-line) and online.

[0016] The contents server 112 offers a sport, music, comics, shopping information, and other various information.

[0017] The message server 113 offers the environment of message switching [real time / between users]. In detail, the environment for the messenger cable application which a user starts on a client machine, and chat application is offered. The message server 113 also performs routing (setup of a transmission place and a path) for distributing the exchange message of messenger cable application, and the chat message of chat application.

[0018] A mail server 114 offers the electronic mail exchange service between users.

[0019] Game A server 116a and game B server 116b offer an online game. A user starts the online game in a game server from a viewer, and performs a game. For example, in the case of a role playing game (game which a user becomes the character of a game and is played), the online game can perform a role playing game with other member users.

[0020] Profile server 102g, a status file is memorized to internal storage, and a user's profile (profile, introduction), the below-mentioned status information, the below-mentioned petit message, etc. corresponding to the account are memorized and managed to a status file for every account of a user. A user can register the information on being one's profile, a petit message, and a child from a viewer to profile server 102g.

[0021] Clients 103a and 103b are game machines (video) for home use, for example, can use PlayStation II (trademark) of Sony Corp.

[0022] Clients 104a and 104b are general-purpose personal computers (hereafter referred to as PC). The above-mentioned client can load and perform the below-mentioned program concerning above-mentioned this invention from record media, such as CDROM. Clients 103a, 103b, 104a, and 104b may only be named a client generically.

[0023] A communication network 101 connects the server group 102, the above-mentioned clients 103a, 103b, 104a, and 104b, etc. As a communication network 101, the Internet is assumed with this operation gestalt. What is necessary is just to use the usual protocols, such as TCP/IP, and HTTP (hypertext transfer protocol), SMTP (simple mail transfer protocol), FTP (file transfer protocol), for transmission and reception of data.

- [0024] This operation gestalt explains briefly the case where a client is set to video game machine 103a for home use.
- [0025] Client 103a contains the body of a game machine, a television set, a CD-ROM drive, and a controller at least.
- [0026] The body 201 of a game machine starts a viewer, and is accessed to the server group 102. A television set outputs the image from the body 201 of a game machine, and the data of a sound. A controller inputs directions of a user into the body 201 of a game machine. A viewer is installed in the body of a game machine from CDROM. With this operation gestalt, the program of drawing 5 is incorporated in the viewer, and when CPU within the body of a game machine performs the program of drawing 5, information processing concerning this invention is performed.
- [0027] More specifically, the status (use situation) of other users from whom the user is the member of an information service system all over the display screen of drawing 6 using game machine 103a can be known. here, when it is connected whether it has connected with an information service system, the status uses what kind of data utility, or comes out of whether you are a child.
- [0028] The user set as the object of the information of the status can also be restricted. In this case, the user registers the identifier of the user who wants to know the status from a client to the profile server 115 beforehand. The file which summarized a user's identifier registered is prepared for every user. With this operation gestalt, this file will be called a friend list.
- [0029] With this operation gestalt, the user name which does not want to know the status can also be registered into the profile server 115 from a client. The file of the registered user name is carried out to calling it a blacklist with this operation gestalt. A blacklist is also prepared for every user.
- [0030] Based on the above point, the information approach of other users' status is explained with reference to drawing 2.
- [0031] The user B of "akiko" accesses [a user name] data utility using client 104b. him with user ID and a password — after authentication is performed by the authentication server 111, access to game server 116a is permitted. If User's B client 104b accesses game server 116a, for example, a role playing game is started, game server 116a will send the status information which shows that it is in the condition which started the game in the user name ("akiko" in this case) which started the game, a game name and the status, and this case to the profile server 115 to the profile server 115. The user name and status information which were sent are memorized in the profile data storage region of a user name "akiko."
- [0032] Since the profile server 115 transmits periodically the status condition of the client registered into the friend list to Client A when the user name "akiko" is registered into the friend list of User's A clients (user name "naoko"), the message "under adventure" is displayed on the right of a user name [akiko]. [which shows the purport that "akiko" started the game to the display screen of Client A, at this time as shown in drawing 2] In addition, "during an adventure", it is the message assigned to a certain specific game, and when User B starts other games, the message showing the contents of a game is displayed. This message is prepared by the profile server 115, and is sent to client 104a from the profile server 115. The message shown in the diagonal left of a user name will call it a petit message in these specifications by the message which the user of a client gives.
- [0033] Thus, User A chooses, and if the user B corresponding to the user name ("akiko") registered into the friend list uses a client and accesses an information service system, the information service name which the user uses will be displayed on the display screen of Client A.
- [0034] Like [self status information] ****, since status information and a petit message are sent to client 104a from the profile server 115, self status information and petit message are expressed to client 104a as this gestalt.
- [0035] Moreover, the status information of the client of the user who registered with the friend list is displayed on the display screen of User's B client 104b as well as client 104a.
- [0036] The game server (an example of the server which offers data utility) for performing such information processing, a profile server, and the contents of information processing of a client are shown in drawing 3 – drawing 5.
- [0037] The procedure shown in drawing 3 – drawing 5 is the gestalt of the object represented by the program which can perform CPU, a script, or markup language document like an HTML document, it is saved at the hard disk in each equipment, is loaded to a system memory, and is performed by CPU. Here, a program means the object CPU was indicated to be with the machine language in which immediate execution is possible. A script means the object to which the contents of information processing which CPU should perform are defined, and CPU performs the defined contents of information processing with an interpreter. An interpreter is a program which translates a script into a machine language program. A markup language document is analyzed by a browser and the called program, and a browser executes the instruction (called a tag) of operation defined in the markup language document.

[0038] Game server 116a is explained to an example for actuation of the server which offers data utility with reference to drawing 3.

[0039] Game server 116a will hand over the class name of an online game to the profile server 115 in the client name sent from a client and an information service name, and this case, if the first access request from a client is received. Then, offer of the specified data utility is started (step S10→ S15).

[0040] While the communication link for data utility is performed, game server 116a repeats and performs the procedure of a start → step S10 → S20 → S25 → end, and offers the online game by two or more users in the same data utility as usual, and this case. Termination of data utility sends the information which shows the purport of termination to the profile server 115 (step S30→ S50).

[0041] The contents of processing by the side of the profile server 115 are explained with reference to drawing 4.

[0042] In the profile server 115, procedure of drawing 4 is repeated and performed and information transmission is stood by from the server for information service provisions, and a user's client. From the server for data utility, when above-mentioned status information and an above-mentioned user name are sent, status information is written in the status information storage region (status file) corresponding to a user name (step S100→ S105).

[0043] In a user's client, if it is a fixed period, and the profile server 115 receives this demand since a demand of status information is sent while having connected with an information service system, status information, a petit message, etc. which are indicated by the user list corresponding to the user name of the client which required will be extracted, and it will transmit to the client which required (step S 110→ S115).

[0044] With this operation gestalt, the profile server 115 offers a user's retrieval function. For this reason, if the profile server 115 receives a category, for example, the identifier of a certain specific online game, as retrieval conditions from a user's client, the profile server 115 will search all users' status information, and will transmit the status information corresponding to the retrieval conditions given from the client to the client which performed the retrieval demand. In this retrieval result, the number of the user corresponding to retrieval conditions is contained. Although mentioned later, when a user's status information acquired as a retrieval result exceeds a predetermined number, 20 [for example,], status information is transmitted to a client according to directions of a client side per 20 pieces (step S120→ S125). In addition, the status information which has the user name indicated by the blacklist is removed from the object of transmission.

[0045] Actuation of a client side is explained with reference to drawing 5.

[0046] At a client side, it is fixed time amount after an information service system and by an internal timer etc. For example, 10 seconds is clocked, and whenever 10 seconds pass, status information is required from the profile server 115. Since a user's status information indicated by the friend list from the profile server 115 according to this demand is sent, that status information is displayed on the display screen (step S210→ S215).

[0047] The gestalt is shown in the signs 1005, 1009, 1010, and 1012 of drawing 6. In addition, notice drawing 6 about the point which is the status information in a user's retrieval screen. Incidentally, it is the icon which shows whether the sign 1005 is connected to data utility, and the gestalten of an icon differ by connection and connectionless. The information which shows that 1009 is a user name and 1010 is a child, and 1011 show the name of an online game with the contents of a class of the used data utility, and this gestalt. 1012 shows the status (operating state).

[0048] A user inputs a category using a non-illustrated retrieval condition input screen. For example, if a specific online game is inputted as a category, since the profile server 115 will return the status information of the user about the inputted category to the client which carried out the retrieval demand, at a client, it displays with the gestalt which shows the status information to drawing 6.

[0049] The display screen of drawing 6 is explained briefly. 1001 is a field which displays the number of users corresponding to category retrieval conditions. 1002 is a display which shows the class of category. 1003 is the display of the number of users corresponding to retrieval conditions. 1004 is a petit message and is the message which the user who has the displayed user name registered.

[0050]

[Table 1]

1 D	利用状況	プチメッセージ
1	冒険しようよ	party
2	冒険中	冒険中
3	item 販売中です	item sell

[0051] In the client side, it sets up beforehand so that a use situation may understand the petit message

corresponding to a user's use situation at a glance for a user, as shown in Table 1.

[0052] Here, based on each user's use situation sent from the server side, the use situation ***** petit message is displayed on the business shown in drawing 6 in the configuration of an icon (blowdown) beside each user name.

[0053] moreover — here — “— venturing — a way — ” — although it corresponds by [party] and 1 to 1 — — “— venturing — a way — ” — ** — “under participant collection” — “— language, such as adventure waiting”, may be similarly matched with [party]. [with the same semantics] Similarly, two or more use situations with the same semantics as one petit message may be matched.

[0054] Moreover, beforehand, “a use situation (purpose)” and a petit message are made to correspond beforehand, and are registered into the server side, and you may make it send to a client from a server as individual humanity news also about a petit message. A petit message is displayed without setting up a petit message by oneself by KURAINTO by doing so.

[0055] Thus, with this operation gestalt, the profile server has the list of friends which each user registered, and each friend's individual humanity news is contained there.

[0056] When the use situation of an information server is included in this individual humanity news and change is in a use situation, that information is transmitted to a profile server from an information server, and individual humanity news is updated. This profile data is periodically sent to a client.

[0057] In a client, each friend's situation can be checked on a screen based on the sent information. At this time, a friend's situation can be easily checked by displaying the petit message registered corresponding to the “purpose” which each user has registered beforehand.

[0058] 1008 is an icon which shows whether the user has registered with the information service system. A different icon is displayed according to the existence of connection. The icon image is prepared for the client side and the icon image used for a display is chosen by the client side based on the status information transmitted from the profile server 115.

[0059] 1009 is the user name of the member of an information service system. 1011 is a used information service name. 1012 is the information showing the situation of a user's client of operation.

[0060] 1006 is a carbon button (the BACK carbon button is called) it is directed that returns with the display near at hand of a retrieval result. 1007 is a carbon button which directs a sort, i.e., rearrangement of a retrieval result, and a display is rearranged for every field beforehand defined according to actuation of this carbon button. 1008 is a carbon button (the NEXT carbon button is called) it is directed that advances a retrieval result previously.

[0061] If a user gives retrieval conditions to the profile server 115, as the message which shows a petit message, the connection / connectionless information to an information service system, the information on whether you are a child, and operating state as status information corresponding to retrieval conditions is sent to a client from the profile server 115 and it is shown in drawing 6 , it will be expressed as this gestalt by the KURAINTO side.

[0062] when a user operates the sort carbon button 1007, directions of a sort send to the profile server 115 from a client — having — the profile server 115 side — base — TINGU processing is performed and the result is returned to a client. The result of sorting is displayed on the display screen of a client (step S220→ S225).

[0063] If the BACK carbon button 1006 is operated, a demand of 20 status information in front of in a retrieval result will be sent to the profile server 115 from a client, and the corresponding status information will be sent to a client. In a client, the sent status information is displayed on the display screen (step S230→ S235).

[0064] If the NEXT carbon button 1008 is operated, a demand of 20 status information after being in a retrieval result will be sent to the profile server 115 from a client, and the corresponding status information will be sent to a client. In a client, the sent status information is displayed on the display screen (step S240→ S245).

[0065] The following gestalt other than an above-mentioned operation gestalt can be carried out.

1) Although the above-mentioned operation gestalt showed the online game as an example of data utility, don't limit ** service to this.

2) Although he is trying to send the number of specification in it to a client from a profile server with an above-mentioned operation gestalt when a large number [status information], you may make it send all retrieval results to a client.

3) The information gestalt of status information can be made into various kinds of gestalten, such as an icon, an alphabetic character, and a graphic form.

4) In the game equipment as used in the field of this invention, all the information management systems that can connect exclusive game equipment, a general-purpose personal computer, a portable telephone, a portable information terminal, etc. to an information service system, and can receive offer of data utility

are contained.

5) Although the Internet was assumed as a communication network with the above-mentioned operation gestalt, in the concept of a communication network, various kinds of communication networks, such as LAN and a general dial-up line, are included.

6) The data utility which an information service system offers means an online game, a chat (teleconference), messaging, electronic mail transceiver service, and the other services that offer service. Although various deformation is possible, as long as the technical thought which the deformation shows to a claim is met besides the modification mentioned above, the deformation becomes technical within the limits of this invention.

7) Although the game server etc. detected a user's use situation and the profile server has notified the use situation to the client with the above-mentioned operation gestalt, detection and a notice of a use situation may be performed by one set of a server.

[0066]

[Effect of the Invention] As mentioned above, according to invention of claims 1-6, as explained, since other users' individual humanity news can be known, by the game equipment side, the user linked to an information service system can be found easily.

[Translation done.]

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TECHNICAL FIELD

[Field of the Invention] When information service systems, such as a server, and connection are possible for this invention and it receives various data utility from a server through a communication network, it relates to suitable game equipment, an information service system, the data utility approach, a record medium, and a program.

[Translation done.]

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PRIOR ART

[Description of the Prior Art] Game equipment is connected to the server connected to the online game, i.e., the Internet, by the spread of communication networks, such as the Internet, and the online game which performs a game by the game equipment side using the game related information offered from a server is also started.

[0003] Some games played independently have a user, and an online game has some games in which two or more users participate like a versus fighting game.

[Translation done.]

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EFFECT OF THE INVENTION

[Effect of the Invention] As mentioned above, according to invention of claims 1-6, as explained, since other users' individual humanity news can be known, by the game equipment side, the user linked to an information service system can be found easily.

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TECHNICAL PROBLEM

[Problem(s) to be Solved by the Invention] When performing the online game in which two or more users participate, users scramble for communication beforehand with a telephone or an electronic mail, and they decide on the time which performs a game.

[0005] Therefore, other users who perform a game together will be restricted to a familiar friend. Moreover, although looking for a waging-war partner by the chat on the Internet (teleconference room) etc. is also considered, a waging-war partner is not necessarily surely found.

[0006] Then, the purpose of this invention is to offer the game equipment and the server system which can find other users easily when using data utility with other users, such as an online game, the data utility approach, a record medium, and a record medium.

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MEANS

[Means for Solving the Problem] In order to attain such a purpose, invention of claim 1 It is the server system equipped with the profile server which two or more game equipments are connected through the communication network, and stores the individual humanity news about each user, and the information offer server which offers at least one data utility. The registration means for choosing other one user at least and registering with said profile server, in order that a user may check about other users' individual humanity news, When there is a demand of information service provision from said game equipment, said information offer server In a notice means to notify to a profile server that the demand of information offer was performed from the game equipment with which the demand was performed, and a profile server It is characterized by having an updating means to update the individual humanity news of the user of a game machine to whom said demand was given, and a transmitting means to transmit other users' individual humanity news registered at the predetermined spacing to said user's game machine.

[0008] Invention of claim 2 is game equipment connected to the server system equipped with the profile server which stores the individual humanity news about each user, and the information offer server which offers at least one data utility. While individual humanity news including the use situation of said data utility of other at least one user beforehand chosen by the user is registered into the profile server and said registered individual humanity news is updated at the predetermined spacing It is periodically transmitted to said game machine, and is characterized by equipping said game machine with the display-control means on which said transmitted individual humanity news is displayed.

[0009] invention of claim 3 — said — others — the setting means for setting up the conversion table for displaying the use situation of a user's data utility according to a predetermined format — having — **** — said display-control means — said conversion table — using — said — others — it is characterized by displaying the use situation of a user's data utility according to a predetermined format.

[0010] Invention of claim 4 is characterized by said predetermined format being an icon.

[0011] Invention of claim 5 is the record medium which recorded the program performed with the game equipment connected to the server system equipped with the profile server which stores the individual humanity news about each user, and the information offer server which offers at least one data utility. While individual humanity news including the use situation of said data utility of other at least one user beforehand chosen by the user is registered into the profile server and said registered individual humanity news is updated at the predetermined spacing It is periodically transmitted to said game machine, and said program is characterized by having the display-control step on which said transmitted individual humanity news is displayed.

[0012] Invention of claim 6 is a program performed with the game equipment connected to the server system equipped with the profile server which stores the individual humanity news about each user, and the information offer server which offers at least one data utility. While individual humanity news including the use situation of said data utility of other at least one user beforehand chosen by the user is registered into the profile server and said registered individual humanity news is updated at the predetermined spacing It is periodically transmitted to said game machine, and said program is characterized by having the display-control step on which said transmitted individual humanity news is displayed.

[0013] [Embodiment of the Invention] Hereafter, the operation gestalt of this invention is explained to a detail with reference to a drawing.

[0014] The system configuration of the whole network system of this operation gestalt is shown in drawing 1. In drawing 1, a network system contains a communication network 101, the server group 102 of a network service company, and the client that two or more users in whom the server group 102 and connection are possible use through a communication network 101, for example, 103a, 103b, 104a, 104b, etc. The server group 102 and Clients 103a, 103b, 104a, and 104b are computer systems respectively.

[0015] The server group 102 and two or more sorts of internal servers operate cooperatively, and offer

various data utility. The information service system which makes 1 set two or more sorts of below-mentioned servers in the server group 102 is installed in every country in the world, and constitutes the server group 102. An information service system has an authentication server 111, the contents server 112, the message server 113, a mail server 114, game A server 116a, game B server 116b, and profile server 102g. An authentication server 111 manages a member user's account (user ID (identifier)) and password. Moreover, you may make it an authentication server 111 manage the address of the client machine of the user who is among a user's connection situation (online/off-line) and online.

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[0022] Clients 104a and 104b are general-purpose personal computers (hereafter referred to as PC). The above-mentioned client can load and perform the below-mentioned program concerning above-mentioned this invention from record media, such as CDROM. Clients 103a, 103b, 104a, and 104b may only be named a client generically.

[0023] A communication network 101 connects the server group 102, the above-mentioned clients 103a, 103b, 104a, and 104b, etc. As a communication network 101, the Internet is assumed with this operation gestalt. What is necessary is just to use the usual protocols, such as TCP/IP, and HTTP (hypertext transfer protocol), SMTP (simple mail transfer protocol), FTP (file transfer protocol), for transmission and reception of data.

[0024] This operation gestalt explains briefly the case where a client is set to video game machine 103a for home use.

[0025] Client 103a contains the body of a game machine, a television set, a CD-ROM drive, and a controller at least.

[0026] The body 201 of a game machine starts a viewer, and is accessed to the server group 102. A television set outputs the image from the body 201 of a game machine, and the data of a sound. A controller inputs directions of a user into the body 201 of a game machine. A viewer is installed in the body of a game machine from CDROM. With this operation gestalt, the program of drawing 5 is incorporated in the viewer, and when CPU within the body of a game machine performs the program of drawing 5, information processing concerning this invention is performed.

[0027] More specifically, the status (use situation) of other users from whom the user is the member of an information service system all over the display screen of drawing 6 using game machine 103a can be known. here, when it is connected whether it has connected with an information service system, the status uses what kind of data utility, or comes out of whether you are a child.

[0028] The user set as the object of the information of the status can also be restricted. In this case, the user registers the identifier of the user who wants to know the status from a client to the profile server 115 beforehand. The file which summarized a user's identifier registered is prepared for every user. With this operation gestalt, this file will be called a friend list.

[0029] With this operation gestalt, the user name which does not want to know the status can also be registered into the profile server 115 from a client. The file of the registered user name is carried out to calling it a blacklist with this operation gestalt. A blacklist is also prepared for every user.

[0030] Based on the above point, the information approach of other users' status is explained with reference to drawing 2.

[0031] The user B of "akiko" accesses [a user name] data utility using client 104b. him with user ID and

a password — after authentication is performed by the authentication server 111, access to game server 116a is permitted. If User's B client 104b accesses game server 116a, for example, a role playing game is started, game server 116a will send the status information which shows that it is in the condition which started the game in the user name ("akiko" in this case) which started the game, a game name and the status, and this case to the profile server 115 to the profile server 115. The user name and status information which were sent are memorized in the profile data storage region of a user name "akiko."

[0032] Since the profile server 115 transmits periodically the status condition of the client registered into the friend list to Client A when the user name "akiko" is registered into the friend list of User's A clients (user name "naoko"), the message "under adventure" is displayed on the right of a user name [akiko].

[which shows the purport that "akiko" started the game to the display screen of Client A, at this time as shown in drawing 2] In addition, "during an adventure", it is the message assigned to a certain specific game, and when User B starts other games, the message showing the contents of a game is displayed. This message is prepared by the profile server 115, and is sent to client 104a from the profile server 115. The message shown in the diagonal left of a user name will call it a petit message in these specifications by the message which the user of a client gives.

[0033] Thus, User A chooses, and if the user B corresponding to the user name ("akiko") registered into the friend list uses a client and accesses an information service system, the information service name which the user uses will be displayed on the display screen of Client A.

[0034] Like [self status information] ****, since status information and a petit message are sent to client 104a from the profile server 115, self status information and petit message are expressed to client 104a as this gestalt.

[0035] Moreover, the status information of the client of the user who registered with the friend list is displayed on the display screen of User's B client 104b as well as client 104a.

[0036] The game server (an example of the server which offers data utility) for performing such information processing, a profile server, and the contents of information processing of a client are shown in drawing 3 - drawing 5 .

[0037] The procedure shown in drawing 3 - drawing 5 is the gestalt of the object represented by the program which can perform CPU, a script, or markup language document like an HTML document, it is saved at the hard disk in each equipment, is loaded to a system memory, and is performed by CPU. Here, a program means the object CPU was indicated to be with the machine language in which immediate execution is possible. A script means the object to which the contents of information processing which CPU should perform are defined, and CPU performs the defined contents of information processing with an interpreter. An interpreter is a program which translates a script into a machine language program. A markup language document is analyzed by a browser and the called program, and a browser executes the instruction (called a tag) of operation defined in the markup language document.

[0038] Game server 116a is explained to an example for actuation of the server which offers data utility with reference to drawing 3 .

[0039] Game server 116a will hand over the class name of an online game to the profile server 115 in the client name sent from a client and an information service name, and this case, if the first access request from a client is received. Then, offer of the specified data utility is started (step S10→ S15).

[0040] While the communication link for data utility is performed, game server 116a repeats and performs the procedure of a start → step S10 → S20 → S25 → end, and offers the online game by two or more users in the same data utility as usual, and this case. Termination of data utility sends the information which shows the purport of termination to the profile server 115 (step S30→ S50).

[0041] The contents of processing by the side of the profile server 115 are explained with reference to drawing 4 .

[0042] In the profile server 115, procedure of drawing 4 is repeated and performed and information transmission is stood by from the server for information service provisions, and a user's client. From the server for data utility, when above-mentioned status information and an above-mentioned user name are sent, status information is written in the status information storage region (status file) corresponding to a user name (step S100→ S105).

[0043] In a user's client, if it is a fixed period, and the profile server 115 receives this demand since a demand of status information is sent while having connected with an information service system, status information, a petit message, etc. which are indicated by the user list corresponding to the user name of the client which required will be extracted, and it will transmit to the client which required (step S 110→ S115).

[0044] With this operation gestalt, the profile server 115 offers a user's retrieval function. For this reason, if the profile server 115 receives a category, for example, the identifier of a certain specific online game, as retrieval conditions from a user's client, the profile server 115 will search all users' status information, and

will transmit the status information corresponding to the retrieval conditions given from the client to the client which performed the retrieval demand. In this retrieval result, the number of the user corresponding to retrieval conditions is contained. Although mentioned later, when a user's status information acquired as a retrieval result exceeds a predetermined number, 20 [for example,], status information is transmitted to a client according to directions of a client side per 20 pieces (step S120→ S125). In addition, the status information which has the user name indicated by the blacklist is removed from the object of transmission. [0045] Actuation of a client side is explained with reference to drawing 5 .

[0046] At a client side, it is fixed time amount after an information service system and by an internal timer etc. For example, 10 seconds is clocked, and whenever 10 seconds pass, status information is required from the profile server 115. Since a user's status information indicated by the friend list from the profile server 115 according to this demand is sent, that status information is displayed on the display screen (step S210→ S215).

[0047] The gestalt is shown in the signs 1005, 1009, 1010, and 1012 of drawing 6 . In addition, notice drawing 6 about the point which is the status information in a user's retrieval screen. Incidentally, it is the icon which shows whether the sign 1005 is connected to data utility, and the gestalten of an icon differ by connection and connectionless. The information which shows that 1009 is a user name and 1010 is a child, and 1011 show the name of an online game with the contents of a class of the used data utility, and this gestalt. 1012 shows the status (operating state).

[0048] A user inputs a category using a non-illustrated retrieval condition input screen. For example, if a specific online game is inputted as a category, since the profile server 115 will return the status information of the user about the inputted category to the client which carried out the retrieval demand, at a client, it displays with the gestalt which shows the status information to drawing 6 .

[0049] The display screen of drawing 6 is explained briefly. 1001 is a field which displays the number of users corresponding to category retrieval conditions. 1002 is a display which shows the class of category. 1003 is the display of the number of users corresponding to retrieval conditions. 1004 is a petit message and is the message which the user who has the displayed user name registered.

[0050]

[Table 1]

ID	利用状況	プチメッセージ
1	冒険しようよ	party
2	冒険中	冒険中
3	item 販売中です	item sell

[0051] In the client side, it sets up beforehand so that a use situation may understand the petit message corresponding to a user's use situation at a glance for a user, as shown in Table 1.

[0052] Here, based on each user's use situation sent from the server side, the use situation ***** petit message is displayed on the business shown in drawing 6 in the configuration of an icon (blowdown) beside each user name.

[0053] moreover — here — “ — venturing — a way — ” — although it corresponds by [party] and 1 to 1 — “ — venturing — a way — ” — ** — “under participant collection” — “ — language, such as adventure waiting”, may be similarly matched with [party]. [with the same semantics] Similarly, two or more use situations with the same semantics as one petit message may be matched.

[0054] Moreover, beforehand, “a use situation (purpose)” and a petit message are made to correspond beforehand, and are registered into the server side, and you may make it send to a client from a server as individual humanity news also about a petit message. A petit message is displayed without setting up a petit message by oneself by KURAINTO by doing so.

[0055] Thus, with this operation gestalt, the profile server has the list of friends which each user registered, and each friend's individual humanity news is contained there.

[0056] When the use situation of an information server is included in this individual humanity news and change is in a use situation, that information is transmitted to a profile server from an information server, and individual humanity news is updated. This profile data is periodically sent to a client.

[0057] In a client, each friend's situation can be checked on a screen based on the sent information. At this time, a friend's situation can be easily checked by displaying the petit message registered corresponding to the “purpose” which each user has registered beforehand.

[0058] 1008 is an icon which shows whether the user has registered with the information service system. A different icon is displayed according to the existence of connection. The icon image is prepared for the client side and the icon image used for a display is chosen by the client side based on the status information transmitted from the profile server 115.

[0059] 1009 is the user name of the member of an information service system. 1011 is a used information service name. 1012 is the information showing the situation of a user's client of operation.

[0060] 1006 is a carbon button (the BACK carbon button is called) it is directed that returns with the display near at hand of a retrieval result. 1007 is a carbon button which directs a sort, i.e., rearrangement of a retrieval result, and a display is rearranged for every field beforehand defined according to actuation of this carbon button. 1008 is a carbon button (the NEXT carbon button is called) it is directed that advances a retrieval result previously.

[0061] If a user gives retrieval conditions to the profile server 115, as the message which shows a petit message, the connection / connectionless information to an information service system, the information on whether you are a child, and operating state as status information corresponding to retrieval conditions is sent to a client from the profile server 115 and it is shown in drawing 6 , it will be expressed as this gestalt by the KURAINTO side.

[0062] when a user operates the sort carbon button 1007, directions of a sort send to the profile server 115 from a client — having — the profile server 115 side — base — TINGU processing is performed and the result is returned to a client. The result of sorting is displayed on the display screen of a client (step S220→ S225).

[0063] If the BACK carbon button 1006 is operated, a demand of 20 status information in front of in a retrieval result will be sent to the profile server 115 from a client, and the corresponding status information will be sent to a client. In a client, the sent status information is displayed on the display screen (step S230→ S235).

[0064] If the NEXT carbon button 1008 is operated, a demand of 20 status information after being in a retrieval result will be sent to the profile server 115 from a client, and the corresponding status information will be sent to a client. In a client, the sent status information is displayed on the display screen (step S240→ S245).

[0065] The following gestalt other than an above-mentioned operation gestalt can be carried out.

- 1) Although the above-mentioned operation gestalt showed the online game as an example of data utility, don't limit ** service to this.
- 2) Although he is trying to send the number of specification in it to a client from a profile server with an above-mentioned operation gestalt when a large number [status information], you may make it send all retrieval results to a client.
- 3) The information gestalt of status information can be made into various kinds of gestalten, such as an icon, an alphabetic character, and a graphic form.
- 4) In the game equipment as used in the field of this invention, all the information management systems that can connect exclusive game equipment, a general-purpose personal computer, a portable telephone, a portable information terminal, etc. to an information service system, and can receive offer of data utility are contained.
- 5) Although the Internet was assumed as a communication network with the above-mentioned operation gestalt, in the concept of a communication network, various kinds of communication networks, such as LAN and a general dial-up line, are included.
- 6) The data utility which an information service system offers means an online game, a chat (teleconference), messaging, electronic mail transceiver service, and the other services that offer service. Although various deformation is possible, as long as the technical thought which the deformation shows to a claim is met besides the modification mentioned above, the deformation becomes technical within the limits of this invention.
- 7) Although the game server etc. detected a user's use situation and the profile server has notified the use situation to the client with the above-mentioned operation gestalt, detection and a notice of a use situation may be performed by one set of a server.

[Translation done.]

*** NOTICES ***

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1. This document has been translated by computer. So the translation may not reflect the original precisely.

2. **** shows the word which can not be translated.

3. In the drawings, any words are not translated.

DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[Brief Description of the Drawings]

[Drawing 1] It is the block diagram showing the system configuration of this invention operation gestalt.

[Drawing 2] It is an explanatory view for explaining the contents of information processing of this invention operation gestalt.

[Drawing 3] It is the flow chart which shows the contents of information processing by the side of a server.

[Drawing 4] It is the flow chart which shows the contents of information processing by the side of a profile server.

[Drawing 5] It is the flow chart which shows the contents of information processing of a client side.

[Drawing 6] It is the explanatory view showing an example of a display of a client side.

[Description of Notations]

102 Server Group

103a, 103b Video game machine

104a, 104b PC

115 Profile Server

[Translation done.]

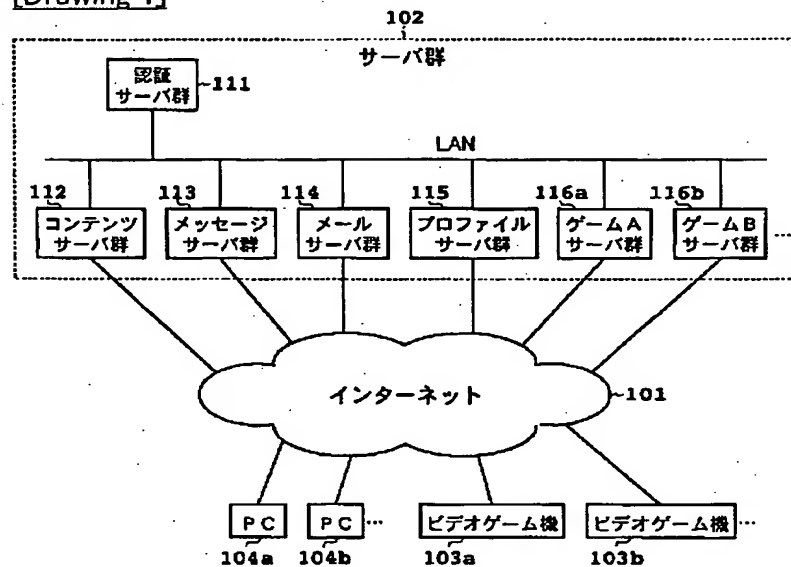
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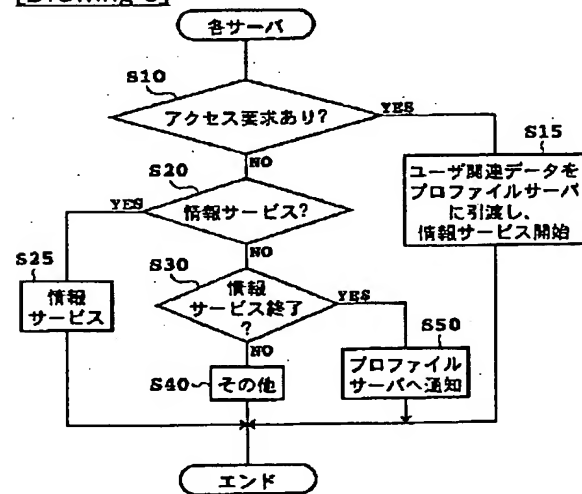
- 1.This document has been translated by computer. So the translation may not reflect the original precisely.
- 2.*** shows the word which can not be translated.
- 3.In the drawings, any words are not translated.

DRAWINGS

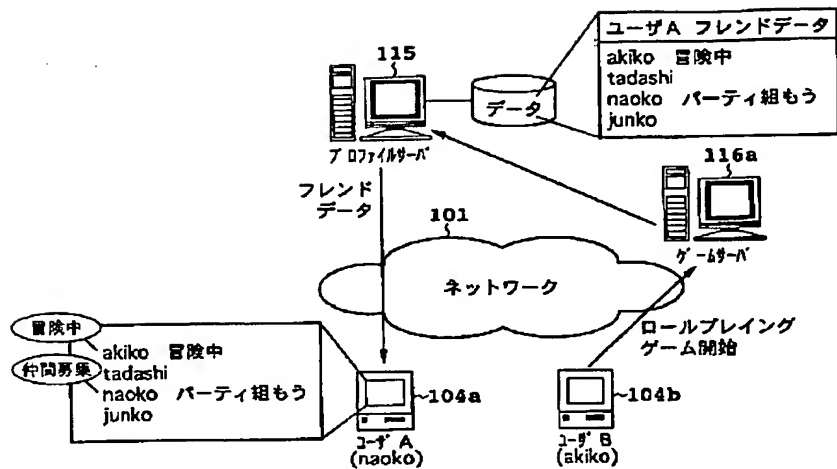
[Drawing 1]



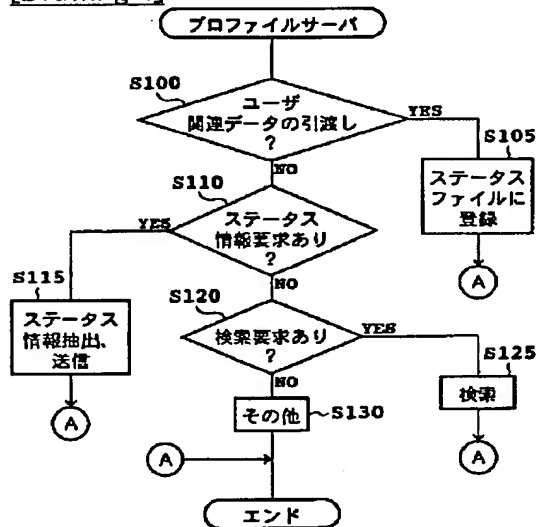
[Drawing 3]



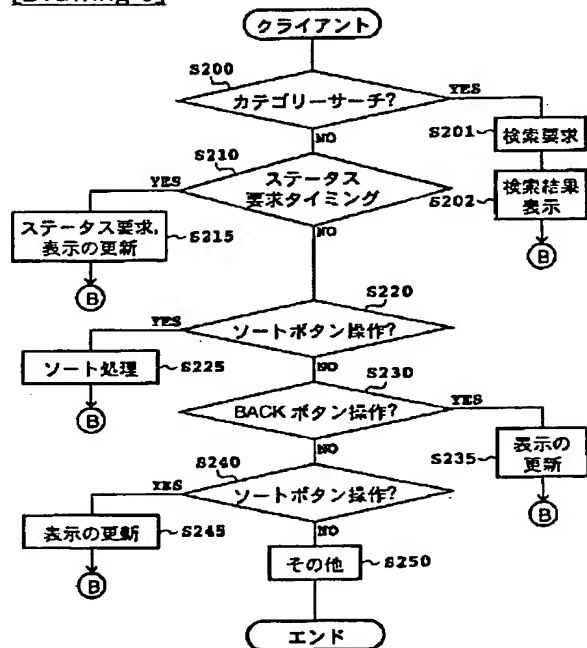
[Drawing 2]



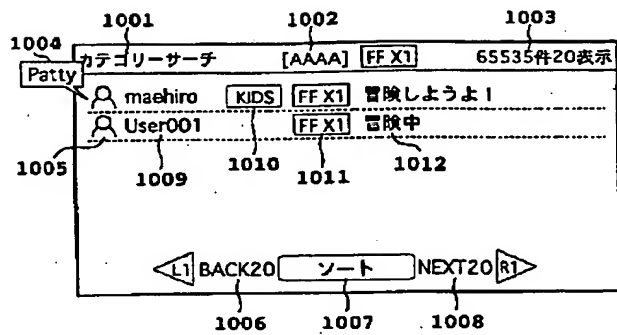
[Drawing 4]



[Drawing 5]



[Drawing 6]



[Translation done.]